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# Profile of a Higher Performing School in the Senior Years

## Engagement, Achievement & Retention

*The Engagement, Achievement & Retention in the Senior Years Project* was undertaken by DECS Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Group in partnership with four secondary schools during the latter part of 2004. The project was designed to develop a profile of a higher performing school in relation to engagement, achievement and retention. An outcome of the project was the identification of 3 characteristics that profile a higher performing school in the senior years:

- 1 Leadership of Learning
- 2 Relationships that Support All Students to Participate
- 3 Inclusive & Innovative Curriculum

Under each of the three major characteristics identified, a number of strategies were identified as contributing to building schools' capacity for higher levels of student engagement, achievement and retention.

This document is dedicated primarily to providing a series of 'strategy snapshots' – practices, programs, resourcing and activities found to be operating in the various schools participating in the project. The diversity of strategies, however, reinforces the idea that there is no single approach or solution to improving student engagement, achievement and retention. The snapshot strategies do provide a range of ideas which the project team observed were making incremental differences at the local level in these 5 schools. On the following pages the 'strategy snapshots' are arranged under each of the three major characteristics. A short profile of the characteristic is followed by the practical snapshot examples.

*Contact details:*

PAULETTE SARGENT  
Policy & Program Officer,  
Learning Outcomes & Curriculum Group  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, DECS  
31 Flinders Street  
Adelaide 5000  
ph: 8226 2515

SUE HICKEY  
Assistant Principal  
Marden Senior College  
Marden Road  
Marden 5070  
ph: 8366 2888  
shickey@mardensc.sa.edu.au

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# Snapshots from Participating Schools

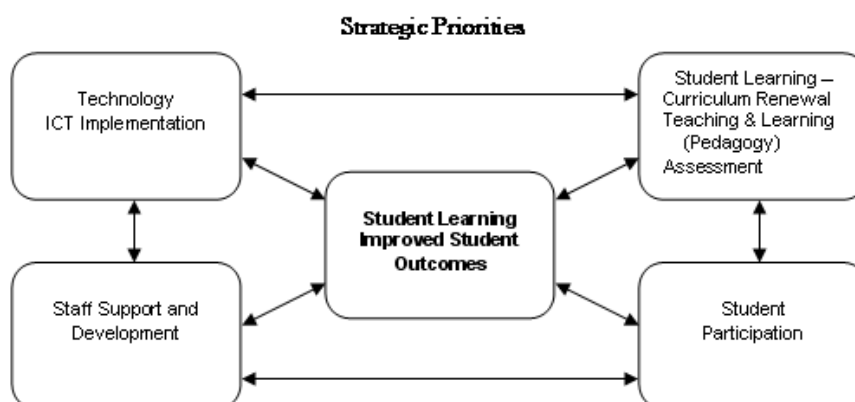
## *Profile Characteristic 1: Leadership of Learning*

Includes:

- Building a learning culture – shared purpose, student learning as highest priority
- Leadership capacity
  - empowering and motivating staff to work up, try out and test out
  - leadership of learning capacity – professional responsibility, regard for learners and their learning
- Leadership of learning depth – level of congruence between stated purpose and actual observable practice
- Curriculum leadership – balance between administrative and curriculum leadership of the school especially at Principal level
- Professional learning culture
  - budgets to support professional learning
  - T&D focusing on improvement of student learning
  - use of data to inform decision making

<b>Snapshot Strategy 1a: Building a Learning Culture</b>
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The Principal of Waikerie High School in his first year of tenure at the school has high expectations and a strong vision squarely centred around student learning and learning outcomes. Staff surveyed at the school have identified the Principal's curriculum leadership as central to building a culture where student engagement, achievement and retention is continually strengthened. Initially the Principal was eager to move things along, but understands that lasting cultural change occurs when the school community (especially staff) own and drive change. To this end he has spent time in the first year in whole of staff workshops centred on a SWOT type analysis of issues, successes, achievements and opportunities. These interactive style workshops, in small groups, have generated a range of ideas all of which have one central priority – student learning and improved outcomes for students. A Strategic Foundations document now outlines areas of growth and strategic endeavour under 8 major issues: vision; planning; shared leadership; resources; monitoring; tools; governance; leadership. In addition a reflective directions paper is being worked on to inform the development of the Site Learning Plan. Four strategic priorities emanate from the centrality of student learning:



for further information contact: [crawford.peter@waikeriehs.sa.edu.au](mailto:crawford.peter@waikeriehs.sa.edu.au)

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### Snapshot Strategy 1b: Clear focus and vision at the Wiltja School

The Wiltja Program at Woodville High School. Wiltja is a school in its own right under the operational control of Anangu Education Services and the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee. The recent (3-5 years) success of the Wiltja program has been no accident. The Program now boasts successful SACE completion of indigenous students in higher numbers than any other school in SA. Success is based on a very clear focus and vision, supporting student learning in two critical areas:

1. the residential environment for Aboriginal students from the Lands – this environment is stable, safe and there are high levels of communication between students, residential manager and staff and the Wiltja Principal and staff
2. commitment to the development of students' literacy skills as the top priority

In particular, the commitment to developing literacy skills has made the most difference to successful learning outcomes for students. When a student first starts at Wiltja there is one top priority – literacy. Literacy is seen as the biggest block to learning – if you can't read and write this severely limits all you can do; it also has a negative effect on self-esteem. Some time ago leadership of the Wiltja looked to find the best literacy program for their needs – one with a scaffolding approach to reading and writing. They chose the Accelerated Literacy Program based on the research of Professor Brian Gray at the University of Canberra. This very explicit pedagogy is used across the whole Wiltja school community and staff selection is now based on a commitment to using this pedagogy. The program is tough, but has proved it provides the necessary long term outcomes for students.

In brief, the Accelerated Literacy Program is based around using one 'rich' age appropriate text (subject matter is appropriate for teenagers, but literacy levels are appropriate for current level of literacy development). Together, class groups of students go deeply into the text; they immerse themselves in it; they dissect it down to its core – often this takes a complete term of study. In this way students develop vocabulary acquisition, deep understanding of the words, themes, issues, analysis. Students work on only one text at a time. Being able to read and really know and understand all aspects of the writing gives students their first real taste of being successful; the methodology is seen as 'liberating'. The process is repeated with other single texts being studied in increasingly shorter time frames. With added confidence and self esteem students come to enjoy their learning and acquire the foundations for successful learning outcomes in the senior school and in particular SACE.

For further information contact: [blines@woodvillehs.sa.edu.au](mailto:blines@woodvillehs.sa.edu.au)

### Snapshot Strategy 1c: Leadership of Learning Extending Into Local Community

A new program initiated by Le Fevre High School – 'Todd Street Business Chambers Program – A Community Partnership', is extending this school's leadership of and enterprising approach to learning, into the local community. The Todd Street Business Chambers situated in Port Adelaide is primarily a 'business incubator' for the local area. More than thirty businesses or organizations are currently affiliated with Todd Street. Le Fevre has developed an affiliation that will extend to a staff member from the school delivering Certificate 2 in Business (Small Business Management) from the actual Chambers from 2005 onwards. Trainees will include students from Le Fevre High School, from other local schools and adults wishing to become involved in researching, setting up and operating their own small business. The Certificate will be delivered under an auspicing agreement with Douglas Mawson Institute of Technology and operate on one full day per week. Advantages of delivering the course from the chambers include:

- access to local business people who will act as mentors and workplace assessors
- a mature and business-like workspace
- the opportunities to develop delivery of training and accreditation to small business personnel in the local community (including Cert IV in Workplace Assessor Training)

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Extending leadership of learning into the local community through this program will have a range of key outcomes including the retention and engagement of Le Fevre High School students; raising the level of employability and entrepreneurship of trainees; and a timely contribution to community and economic development of the area in the light of the Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment.

For more information contact: [toni.andrew@lefevrehs.sa.edu.au](mailto:toni.andrew@lefevrehs.sa.edu.au)

<b>Snapshot Strategy 1d: Enhancing Leadership of Learning - Depth &amp; Capacity</b>
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Placing the leadership of learning for all students as a major priority at Le Fevre High School has resulted in the creation of the position of Flexible Programs Coordinator. This is a leadership position that has increased the depth and capacity of the school to serve the learning needs of all their students.

Essentially the Coordinator works across the senior school to identify students who may, for a range of reasons, become disconnected, disengaged or disinterested in learning. At any one time this might mean the case management of 80-100 students. As well as providing personal non-judgemental counselling support the role involves working out the best way to 'broker' and customise learning for individual students according to their needs, interests and aspirations. The development and maintenance of positive, collaborative relationships between the Flexible Programs team and teaching staff, year level leaders, the VET Coordinator, counsellors, administration and community agencies/organizations is, therefore, essential. Customising learning relies heavily on accessing a full range of learning options and considerable networking in the local community. Some of the options accessed include the flexible curriculum at the Magill Flexi Centre; Youth Opportunities; Service to Youth Council Job Pathways Programme; liaison with Youth Central; on and off-site VET options; using the flexibility of the Community Studies curriculum statement; the NAPP (New Apprenticeship Pilot Program) and a wide range of part-time work/workplacement options. In addition a Flexible Learning Centre has been created on-site. A range of hybrid programs are developed for individual students. Many of these programs are underpinned by the acquisition of competencies in the Certificate I Employment Skills. Accrediting learning is a high priority, leads to high expectations of students but is worked around and linked to the particular interests of individual students.

For further information contact: [pepe.bouzas@lefevrehs.sa.edu.au](mailto:pepe.bouzas@lefevrehs.sa.edu.au)

<b>Snapshot Strategy 1d: Leading Learning for Community Needs</b>
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Leading learning at Murray Bridge High School is very much about understanding and responding to the local context and the realisation that Murray Bridge is very much a regional country centre. As such many parents are anxious that their children find employment opportunity in the local area during and after their senior schooling. In this context the ongoing rural decline in the area since the 90's has become a key factor affecting school curriculum offerings and learning programs provided at the school. In a low-socio economic area with fluctuating employment/unemployment patterns, many industries have closed down, downsized or only operate on a seasonal basis. The school is actively involved in developing niche programs that link to employment opportunities in the area. Strong distribution and manufacturing industries (eg Big W distribution centre; Clipsal manufacturing plant; Composites Fabricators & Fibreglassing) are 'targets' for building learning pathway partnerships to increase student post school opportunities.

The results of developing strong links with niche industries in the local area have led to the successful submission for a Skills Centre on the Murray Bridge High School site. The Skills Centre provides opportunities for students to develop fabricating and fibreglass skills in close liaison with The Newell Group (Composite Fabricators). The Newell Group has successfully put the Murray Bridge area on the global map with their building and distribution of quality fibreglass/polymer aquaculture tanks to the world. In addition the school has recently invested in an industrial kitchen facility that supports students

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growing, harvesting and manufacturing a very diverse range of gourmet products. It also supports the successful catering business students market and run from the school. Courses are offered not only to MBHS, but also to the wider Murraylands region schools. Significant school-based apprenticeships and traineeships have resulted from the school's ability to understand and translate the local context.

For further information contact: [lcresp@murraybridgehs.sa.edu.au](mailto:lcresp@murraybridgehs.sa.edu.au)

## ***Profile Characteristic 2: Relationships That Support All Students to Participate***

Includes:

- Student confidence & self esteem – as the first priority
- Intervention
  - procedures in place for early and timely intervention
  - positive, individualised & non-judgemental in nature
- Orderly and safe environment
- High expectations
  - credible options and standards, recognised accreditation/certification
- Connecting to relevant, individualised and interesting learning
- Positive student/teacher relationships
  - committed staff who connect with students
  - recognition and support for flexible learning options

<b>Snapshot Strategy 2a: Success Oriented Environment</b>
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The stated core values of Woodville High School are diversity, creativity and success. The 'Successful Thinking Process' is a whole school approach to building positive relationships between staff and students. This, in turn, has had a beneficial impact on student/student relationships and overall school 'tone'. The Successful Thinking Process has been guided by the work of Ed Ford (<http://www.responsiblethinking.com/>) – adapted and customised for the Woodville situation by the school's Alternative Programs Coordinator.

The Successful Thinking Process provides clear guidelines for student/teacher interaction where the focus is on 'successful behaviour' or 'unsuccessful behaviour'. In cases of inappropriate behaviour or actions teachers seek to break the cycle by asking questions rather than merely telling students what to do. The process is built on negotiation, recognition of others and their points of view; problem solving and agreeing on solutions. There are a range of steps in the enacted process which ultimately lead to those students most disaffected, disengaged or disinterested in their learning being clearly identified. As a result the Alternative Programs Coordinator is very aware of those students whose current learning program is not suitable.

The work of the Alternative Programs Coordinator collaborating with key staff in the school, with various agencies, other learning institutions and employers in the wider community leads to the development of an individual learning plan for the identified students. Supporting this has been the development of various on-site programs in particular in horticulture and outdoor education. For many of these students the acquisition of apprenticeships and various competencies are providing the means to increased engagement with learning leading to a successful employment pathway beyond school.

For further information contact: [jglass@woodvillehs.sa.edu.au](mailto:jglass@woodvillehs.sa.edu.au)

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### Snapshot Strategy 2b: **Staying Connected**

The recognition that there are students who experience extreme hardship often necessitating them 'dropping out' of school has led to the development of an offline Community Studies program at Woodville High School. Keeping students connected to learning and to a school or personnel within the school when family circumstances mitigate against this, is the driving force of Woodville's program. Extreme hardship occurs for various reasons - becoming the major carer for an invalid parent; becoming the major carer of siblings when one or both parents have left the family home; the student themselves leaving a dysfunctional family situation and living independently; living in a de facto relationship at an early age; pregnancy; suffering from an anxiety disorder - are some probable reasons.

The senior school counsellor and the deputy principal (timetabler) have facilitated a very flexible and adaptable approach to learning for these students, by providing them with the opportunity to study offline. Although not physically attending school students have the benefit of staying connected to the school and to school personnel - this serves to break down feelings of isolation, provides additional emotional support and ensures the student is retained in the learning cycle. Regular contact is made with the student via email, mail, phone calls, SMS and visits to the home and to the school by the student. The school has also been accommodating in assisting a student's community involvement program eg providing a bus ticket.

Through the flexibility of the Community Studies curriculum statement students also negotiate their learning and make links to what is relevant, achievable and interesting for them. Many students are able to link their learning and the circumstances of their hardship to accreditation for the units in Community Studies, eg household budgeting and childrearing.

The key outcomes are cited as students achieving and being successful in the SACE by having their community learning recognised; they are kept connected to the school and its support and social aspects; they can pursue their passion and interests; there is breadth of choice and the flexibilities promote and develop resilience.

For further information contact: [cuphill@woodvillehs.sa.edu.au](mailto:cuphill@woodvillehs.sa.edu.au)

### Snapshot Strategy 2c: **Paralowie House**

Building positive relationships and positive experiences in learning is a key factor in the ongoing success of Salisbury High School's Flexible Learning Education Program run off-campus at Paralowie House. The program caters for young people (41 currently enrolled) aged 15-25 who come from backgrounds of multiple disadvantage, including domestic violence, substance abuse, homelessness, an offending history. Often these students have disengaged from education, would have serious difficulty adjusting to mainstream schooling but still have a wish to complete their secondary schooling.

Paralowie House offers the opportunity for all to participate in learning by focusing on the following: **developing strong relationships:** making sure students are listened to in a non judgemental way and are not belittled; providing an environment in which it is alright to make mistakes; giving acknowledgement and compliment; focusing on assisting students with only one negative behaviour change at a time; genuinely enjoying the company of students; treating students with respect, patience, fairness and consistency

**motivation:** finding out why students are returning to learning and what their long term goals are;

working out together the steps needed to reach those goals and developing programs and courses to suit

**relevant curriculum:** negotiating curriculum with students; integration of learning (eg living independently could involve Maths, Home Economics, Technology and English); using flexibilities of SACE eg Community Studies, Stage 2 Vocational Education; utilising VET in all its forms; recognising community based learning and running short courses

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**self-paced learning & scaffolding:** providing structured packages of information for assignments; providing additional time, quiet spaces and somewhere for work to be stored; scaffolding in various ways – breaking assignments down into steps, clear instructions and clear assessment criteria, active and explicit teaching where necessary and providing generous amounts of feedback

**assessment:** involving students in an assessment process that is based on a specific set of criteria which has not been kept a secret; using many different forms of assessment (observation, quizzes, writing, open book, peer assessment, rubrics etc)

**social inclusion:** holding regular student forums and decision making; actively teaching cooperation and teamwork; role-modelling appropriate behaviour; mediation; rewarding positive behaviour

**social support:** acquisition of emergency assistance for students; providing students with letters of support and references to other agencies and health care professionals; developing student understanding of legal procedures and assistance with forms and applications

**understanding:** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs gives guidance to understanding student needs – survival; safety; belonging; self esteem; intellectual achievement; aesthetic appreciation; self actualisation

**recognition of achievement:** not only in subject 'content', but also in improved personal attitude and confidence; in being able to take responsibility for own actions; successfully living independently; developing organizational skills and managing anger; maintaining high levels of personal hygiene

Staff who deliver the courses at Paralowie House are teachers or hourly paid instructors from other agencies eg from Oz Music. A qualified youth worker (working as an SSO) is employed. Curriculum review involves asking the students what their aims, goals are for the next year and building programs around that. This involves a great deal of planning and re-planning each year and the development of new Stage 1 & 2 assessment plans all the time. Students are supported to take the time they need to finish units of SACE and are often enrolled in the course two or three times until the requirements are met. Flexibility, care and negotiation are the keys to success, not rigidity.

For further information contact: [dlang@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au](mailto:dlang@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au)

### Snapshot Strategy 2d: Improving Participation for Special Class Students

Just over 5 years ago the Senior Special Class students – students with a diverse range of disabilities – at Salisbury High School were on the Stage 1 subject 'merry-go-round'. Students were restricted to learning at Stage 1 level with no clear pathways for SACE completion. Now students have access to Stage 2 options and a pathway to future employment.

The Senior Special Class is made up of students from anywhere in the northern suburbs who meet the 'special class' criteria and are assessed by a guidance officer or speech pathologist. They enter at year 11 and go through to year 12 and 13. The definite aim is that all students complete their SACE and are provided with assistance to access genuine post school options.

The curriculum is decided by the students – initially they meet as a class and brainstorm possibilities; possibilities born out of the relevance, interest and aspirations of the students themselves. All students are involved in goal setting that leads to the development of their own Negotiated Education Plan (NEP). The NEP incorporates an individualised SACE pattern for each student and includes SACE subjects (especially the more flexible kind such as Community Studies) and VET components including Employability Skills Certificate competencies. A typical student might have a learning plan incorporating the following: Community Studies (Health & Recreation in the Community; Business in the Community) English; Maths; and then Independent Living Skills; some VET (fork lift driver's licence, driver's licence).

In the last two years students have found pathways into further education and into employment (traineeships and apprenticeships) at Phoenix Society, in library services, in tyre fitting and bike mechanics, in landscaping and in the construction industry and have been able to demonstrate

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competencies in independent living, community involvement and participation in recreational and social activities.

For further information contact: [emedhurs@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au](mailto:emedhurs@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au)

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**Snapshot Strategy 2e: Office of Employment at Salisbury**

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Salisbury High School makes its mission to students and their families “to successfully place students in higher or further education, training, employment or community service.” To this end a Student Employment Office operates to assist students make the transition from school to further education or employment. An SSO member is dedicated to the running of this office – situated next to Student Services. This office assists students in a variety of ways including:

- career guidance – a critical tool used in this service is the Jiigcal program. The SSO also gives career and transition pathways talks to specific class groups
- resume writing – the SSO conferences with the student then keys the resume. All resumes are stored on the computer and a disk copy is given to the student. A number of different styles of resume are used so all don’t look the same. Students are often surprised with the amount they have accomplished when seen on paper
- organising work placement and work experience. Upon recommendation from a staff member or at the request of individual students work experience is organised by the SSO. Extensive networking has enabled the school to create a very generous database of work placement and work experience contacts with which to match student needs. Work experience is often accessed for those young people most at risk of disengaging or leaving school before the end of senior schooling. A period of work experience often acts to assist students to stay on at school as they come to realise what is necessary in the world of work both in skills required and appropriate workplace behaviour
- managing destination data of all leavers especially year 12 students. Destination data is updated monthly – this is a complex task but provides the necessary data to ensure the school’s alignment with its mission to place all students. The SSO rings every student in order to establish their destination. The destination data is shared regularly with the school community to inform decision making. Students who are listed as ‘seeking employment’ are followed up regularly – the school offers their services to assist past students to find employment. Even though students don’t attend school anymore these services are still provided
- assistance for completion of SATAC applications. The SSO will sit individually with students to discuss future career options and subsequent application through the SATAC process
- providing information to students about a range of ways to access TAFE without a TER score and the development of portfolio and interview skills to assist that process
- managing attendance and student absence. Students will report to this office when late to school or when leaving early. All daily absences are managed from the office. Text messaging to parents is a favoured way of communication relating to student absence
- maintaining and building contacts and networks with various agencies, industry and institutions
- conducting mock interviews with students

For further information contact: [mbaker@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au](mailto:mbaker@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au)

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**Snapshot Strategy 2f: Relationship Building with Care Management System**

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Salisbury High School has a Care Management System that encourages a positive, lasting relationship between the student, the care teacher and the parent/caregiver. When students enter at year 8 they are assigned to a care group. Every teacher (including the Principal) in the school has a care group – in this way the numbers within the care group can be kept to approximately 15 students – small enough to really get to know the students and their parents. The care group teacher remains with the same group for the entire time they are at the school (usually 5 years, year 8 through to year 12). When a care



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teacher's group finally reaches the end of year 12 having been with the one teacher for 5 years the farewells can be particularly emotional.

The small nature of each care group makes contact with parents on individual matters a simple task. If a parent calls the school it is expected that they will speak to the care teacher first. Care management comprises 2 x 10 minutes care periods per day and a 100 minutes session each week and is part of the teaching load of the staff member. The care teacher is responsible for a full range of services/interactions with the student including course counselling, induction, behaviour management, communications with parents.

The core of this successful care management system is the relationship that develops between:

- the student and the care teacher
  - daily management and attendance
  - counsellor, mentor, personal issues, conflict resolution
  - point of contact for parents and other teachers
  - subject and career counselling
- the student and peers
  - relationships, conflict resolution, personal development
- the care teacher and parents/caregivers
  - regular contact and communication (especially through the use of mobile phones)
  - use of diary for positive comments
  - encourages parents to contact and identify with one critical person
- the student and the school community
  - rights and responsibilities
  - using the student counsellor and other agencies when necessary
  - adopting an harassment free zone philosophy
  - marketing the school through positive action
- the student and the care program
  - meaningful care group activities, student leadership and a forum for student voice

Currently the WBLA (writing based literacy assessment) process is also managed by the care teacher with students in the senior years. The completion rate of WBLA by Salisbury High students is extremely high.

For further information contact: [kfitzpat@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au](mailto:kfitzpat@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au)

<b>Snapshot Strategy 2g: Case Management at Murray Bridge</b>
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Murray Bridge High School seeks to provide the best possible educational opportunities for students by adopting standard procedures for the identification and early intervention of students disengaging, disconnected or disinterested in learning. The purposeful case management of all identified students is undertaken. The process begins at the transition from primary school to high school. Identification of students and intervention continues throughout middle and senior schooling using the same procedure. An outline of the procedure is provided below:

- transition of students from primary school and substantial liaison with feeder schools, individual students and their parents
- Murray Bridge High School staff identification of students most at risk (range of reasons eg withdrawn or disruptive behaviour; inadequate literacy or numeracy skills; disinclined; poor attendance; home problems)
- collation of data collected – counsellors collate and add to case management database
- allocation of a case worker/mentor to individual students – this could be a counsellor, the Aboriginal Education worker, special education staff; behaviour management team; home group or subject teacher/s

- case conference and identification of needs of the student
- an action plan and a flexible program developed suited to needs of the individual – underpinned by goal setting; case management pro forma ‘tracks’ progress
- action plan implementation and management
- action plan review
- ongoing feedback to parents, the student and staff

For further information contact: lcresp@murraybridgehs.sa.edu.au

### ***Profile Characteristic 3: Inclusive & Innovative Curriculum***

Includes:

- A “curriculum that is for students, not students for a curriculum”
  - customising learning to student needs, aspirations and potential
- Breaking down barriers to student learning
  - flexibility wherever and whenever possible
  - students believing they can learn
  - parity of esteem between various programs
- Partnership in learning
  - community links, strategic alliances, agency connections, cooperative arrangements
- Quality programs
  - challenging, stimulating, interesting, collaborative, links to life beyond school
  - utilisation of range of options – community based, SACE, VET, school based apprenticeships
  - negotiated learning

#### **Snapshot Strategy 3a: Using VET & Hourly Paid Instructors (HPI)**

Two Case Studies from Waikerie High School

##### **Case 1**

A Year 12 student struggling with the demands of Biology, Physical Education and just coping with English, Business Studies and Community Studies.

- student applied for but missed out on a hair apprenticeship
- disengaged with low motivation and thinking about leaving school
- counsellor investigated TAFE options with this student – Hair & Beauty at Elizabeth found and studied as stand alone VET option. Physical Education was converted to Community Studies (Health, Recreation and the Community)
- different student – motivated, positive outlook and keen to stay on a school
- gained an apprenticeship in Adelaide and is now finishing SACE part time over 2 years

From this beginning nine other students expressed interest in the Hair & Beauty course and also became involved in the course at Elizabeth TAFE. Three of these students have now applied for the Diploma course at Regency TAFE for 2005. The cost of courses at Elizabeth together with the need to reduce students having to travel so far to gain access has prompted Waikerie to investigate running these courses locally under auspicing arrangements, using local providers. Currently a local hairdresser is completing Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training (funded by Futures Connect regional budget) to enable her to deliver competencies at her premises in Waikerie. Other Riverland schools will also have access to the program in 2005.

##### **Case 2**

The Concrete & Masonry Course at Waikerie High School

- having had a change in staff Waikerie High found itself without staff to teach the very popular concrete and masonry course

- the school investigated local trades people and found a builder who seemed interested in working with students on-site at the high school
- builder started to work with students and a teacher to design and construct a new barbecue area on the schools grounds
- support gained from Governing Council for the funding to employ a builder as a HPI for one day per week
- delivery of competencies from the Certificate I Building & Construction training package
- program and delivery of competencies extended to stage 2 Outdoor Construction - students are keen to return to stage 2 to complete Certificate
- possible school based new apprenticeships arising from this course – shortage of builders in Riverland

As a result of these two initiatives Waikerie has developed some very positive community links and other industries are inquiring about possible involvement with the school.

Some key pointers:

- VET Regional Coordinators are key people in this process. They help with key contacts and networking.
- persevere, you may need to ask a different person if you don't get the response you want the first time around. Don't sell the local community short – there is a wealth of experience available if you only ask
- students respond very positively to this type of hands-on learning
- gain support and encouragement from the Governing Council by involving them in each part of the process
- VET must not be considered as the 'lesser' option for students. Develop 'parity of esteem' between courses and programs across the school

For further information contact: [nwhite@waikerie.sa.edu.au](mailto:nwhite@waikerie.sa.edu.au)

### Snapshot Strategy 3b: **VET in Schools – Salisbury High School**

Salisbury High School invests heavily in a huge range of VET courses, School Based New Apprenticeships (SBNA) and Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) options. The aim is to:

- provide a student-centred curriculum
- establish a framework for flexible learning with the school context
- integrate school and community programs and activities
- personalise pathway planning – valid pathways.

These options are supporting SACE completion for many but also providing viable alternatives to completion of the SACE and relevant and meaningful pathways that lead to employment and further training. The extent to which these flexible options have been accessed is, in part, responsible for the increased retention rates at Salisbury High with the rate being the highest level of any school in their like group. Currently there are over 350 students in the senior school involved in these learning options.

In relation to VET programs, Salisbury currently purchases 21 courses from various providers; has auspicing agreements with 5 TAFE's; special agreements with General Motors Holden; and is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for the delivery of Certificate IV in Information Technology. In SWL – students are placed in local industry and various community organizations, some students are involved in specific projects whilst others work in part time employment or community voluntary work. All these options enable students to build accreditation and recognition for their learning.

For further information contact: [hpaphiti@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au](mailto:hpaphiti@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au)

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### Snapshot Strategy 3c: **Broadcasting at Le Fevre**

A high quality program developed with a Radio & Broadcasting focus has been established at Le Fevre High School over the past two years. Integral to the success of this program has been the recruitment of a teacher with significant industry experience in this area. The program not only offers 2 units of SACE in Group 1 at Stage 1, but it also provides a vehicle for a multi-disciplinary approach to assessment in a wide variety of subjects at Stage 1 and Stage 2 level. Students develop and use radio and broadcasting skills for the communication and presentation of their learning across the curriculum. With the advent of the new SACE Literacy Strategy from 2006 onwards this program will be developed and integrated into a range of courses to a greater extent reflecting the changed definition of 'literacy' for SACE completion.

For further information contact: [kerrie.mackey-smith@lefevrehs.sa.edu.asu](mailto:kerrie.mackey-smith@lefevrehs.sa.edu.asu)

### Snapshot Strategy 3d: **Community Studies as a Methodology**

Agreement across all 5 project schools was that a key to student engagement, achievement and retention is *flexibility*. Individual student's ability to pursue personalised learning programs (of relevance and interest to them) was often the critical factor to re-engagement and ultimate SACE completion. Each of the 5 schools involved a substantial degree of flexibility in customising learning programs for individuals, often offered through the vehicle of Community Studies at Stage 1 and 2. The advantages of utilising Community Studies options was found to be so beneficial that all 5 schools had practices and procedures in place to embed the option as an integral part of their engagement and retention policy, essentially providing differentiated pedagogy. It was also noted at each project school that at least one member of the teaching staff was a 'champion of the cause' for promoting, supporting and facilitating this option in some way.

At Le Fevre High School all teaching staff have the option of developing alternative assessment plans for students in their mainstream classes in a horizontal group configuration. One staff member with this role supports teachers to assist students to develop their learning contacts. Teachers are thereby mentored to recognise the need for and devise a personalised program for individual learners. Likewise at Salisbury High School the VET Coordinator works with teachers and individual students to 'convert' what students have, want or are learning to units within the Community Studies framework.

At Woodville High School the Community Studies methodology is used to engage students in their learning by making this option available in every year 11 and 12 class – all teachers are teachers of Community Studies as well as teachers of their own specific subjects. The Student Counsellor is a key person at Woodville High School. The Wiltja school (a school on the Woodville High School site for Indigenous students) uses this methodology to the fullest extent. Great benefits for Indigenous students have been recorded because of its flexibility in offering a mechanism by which students can relate learning back to their communities on The Lands.

At Waikerie High School one particular teacher has 36 years experience at the school, most of which has involved very close work in and with this rural community (including being the recipient of Citizen of the Year Award). Proactive and positive counselling processes assist early intervention and re-connecting students to learning through modifying the learning program using Community Studies.

The VET Coordinator is the key person at Murray Bridge High School for advancing the Community Studies methodology and believes it will "do anything, anytime, anywhere" to enhance engagement with learning. Individual contracts are developed including a range of 'off-line' options for students unable to attend school each day. Keeping to SSABSA rules is an ongoing activity with high levels of lateral thinking involved for the benefit of students.

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Likewise the VET Coordinator is the key person at Salisbury High School facilitating an across the school philosophy of incorporating the methodology upon which Community Studies is built. Counselling and early intervention is facilitated through the Care Management process.

For further information contact: pepe.bouzalas@lefevrehs.sa.edu.au; bnitschke@waikeriehs.sa.edu.au; hpaphiti@salisburyhigh.sa.edu.au; cuphill@woodvillehs.sa.edu.au; lcresp@murraybridgehs.sa.edu.au

### Snapshot Strategy 3e: **Community Studies at Waikerie**

The Community Studies program at Waikerie High School is used as a powerful lever to keep students connected and to reconnect to school. Any student is taken into the Community Studies program at any time throughout the year – as their learning need is identified. The Community Studies teacher has developed an amazing range of links to the local community over a long period of time and has high level passion, enthusiasm and energy for the program and what it can facilitate for student learning and success in the senior years. With an extensive program running in the school a ‘master plan’ ensures that all contracts, SSABSA documentation and diversity of student interests are being catered for. The program is built around two central community organisations – Meals on Wheels and Karingal Hostel for the Aged and then branches out into a range of different organisations – eg Fitness for Life, Full-on-Fest, Front Yard Blitz, Cosmetic Care, Seniors Week and many more.

For further information contact: bnitschke@waikeriehs.sa.edu.au

### Snapshot Strategy 3f: **Flexible Programs at Murray Bridge**

A range of flexible programs at Murray Bridge High School seeks to engage students in learning including:

- The Zoo Crew Program – facilitated through a partnership with Monarto Zoo, students are involved over 3 terms and can be engaged in a range of activities as appropriate to their learning aspirations and needs (eg building & construction, agriculture, fencing, paths, and tree and vegetation propagation). The focus is also on building relationships, communication, working in groups and goal setting
- Young Women Program - primarily an off-site program facilitated through links with Extreme Choices (Youth Sector Network), Reconnect (Anglicare, housing), Murray Mallee Community Health Services. The aim of the learning program is to connect young women to various health and support services while learning and working towards SACE completion
- The Nungas Club Program which is operated through a partnership with IBSM (Inter Behaviour Support Agency); Reconnect and supported by at least 1 AEW on site at Murray Bridge High School. Program works mainly with excluded Aboriginal students. Students attend school on one day per week under the umbrella of the Certificate I Employment Skills to reconnect with learning.

For further information contact: lcresp@murraybridgehs.sa.edu.au